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## **SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES**

### **ARLINGTON CAREER CENTER**

**One-Stop Profile**

**October, 1996**

**Based on a Site Visit Conducted During May, 1996**

# **ARLINGTON CAREER CENTER**

## **ARLINGTON, TEXAS**

### **One-Stop Profile**

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# **ARLINGTON CAREER CENTER**

## **One-Stop Profile**

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### **DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT**

Arlington is a city of approximately 300,000 within the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, located mid-way between Dallas and Fort Worth. A product of rapid urban/suburban development over the last thirty years, Arlington and its environs are still in the process of developing the physical and social services infrastructure typical of longer-established urban areas. For example, Arlington is currently the largest urban area in the U.S. without a public transportation system. The development of the Arlington Career Center as part of a county-wide One-Stop workforce development system reflects an interest among local elected officials to develop a “state-of-the-art” human services delivery system to meet the needs of Arlington residents.

Tarrant County, which contains both Fort Worth and Arlington, has a diversified manufacturing base. However, by the end of the 1980s, the economy was highly defense-dependent. As a result, the local economy was adversely affected by the down-sizing among defense industry contractors that was a national trend between 1990 and 1995. The dislocation among local defense industry workers awakened an awareness among local community leaders of the importance of making workforce development services accessible to Arlington residents. To realize locally-based workforce development services, Arlington separated itself in 1994 from the Fort Worth service delivery area (SDA) for the JTPA system and joined the Balance of Tarrant County SDA. As part of the Tarrant County SDA, Arlington was able to secure its own JTPA service center while planning for the development of One-Stop workforce development services.

The Arlington Career Center (“Center”) is part of a network of seven career centers and three satellite offices developed in Tarrant County as part of the One-Stop career center initiative. Workforce development agency partners at the Arlington site have a strong recent history of collaboration that pre-dates the One-Stop

Implementation Grant. As described in greater detail in the section on governance below, a local Job Training Interim Committee was initiated in 1994. Regular committee meetings over an 18 month period led to the establishment of the Arlington Career Center as a One-Stop center based on interagency collaboration and planning and coordinated service delivery.

The stated vision of the Arlington Career is to provide a “One-Stop Career Center which serves individuals from all segments of the community with useful information and integrated services that develop job related skills and connect job seekers with employment opportunities.”

Several interrelated factors have influenced the context within which the local One-Stop vision continues to emerge and take shape. Significant contextual variables include: (1) the importance of early pilot funding from the state to support the development of the local One-Stop vision; (2) strong local support from elected officials and agencies, including community block grant support for the development of a new career center facility; (3) a commitment to strong interagency communication and coordination among local workforce development and human service agencies; (4) strong leadership within the local workforce development partnership from the local JTPA administrative entity; (5) uncertainty about how the different partners will work together in a new county-wide workforce development system; and (6) the need to respond to the lack of transportation resources in the local community. Each of these factors is briefly described below.

- *Tarrant County was a recipient of one of the first five local One-Stop pilot implementation grants awarded within Texas.* As one of the first One-Stop implementation sites in the state, the Center has had time to develop many of the key aspects of its One-Stop vision.
- *The Center has profited from strong local political and community support.* In response to a 1992 United Way study that identified unemployment, underemployment, and skills deficits among adults in the Arlington community, support emerged for enhanced workforce development services. In 1993, a consensus was reached among political leaders and service providers that individuals and businesses would benefit from a career center, and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds were allocated for a Center. By the spring of 1995, nearly \$1.3 million in CDBG funds had been earmarked for the purchase and/or renovation of a local career center facility.
- *There is a commitment to inter-agency coordination and communication throughout the county.* There is a history of inter-agency coordination

in Arlington and a continuing interest among partners in the One-Stop project to link various social services and workforce development efforts.

- *The Center is an example of a JTPA-led program working in close partnership with the local Texas Workforce Commission offices to encourage a broad interagency partnership at the Center.* The Center's vision has been to include as many partners as feasible into the activities of the Center, including not only the operators of the mandated programs (e.g., JTPA, ES), but also community based organizations, local training providers and social service agencies. This continuing drive to promote wide partnership at the Center builds on County experiences of inter-agency coordination and communication, which began even before the One-Stop initiative.
- *The dynamic context within which One-Stop is emerging offers many challenges.* These include the relatively recent nature of workforce development services based in the Arlington community, uncertainty about which agencies will continue to provide what types of services, and difficulties to-date in finding a site large enough to accommodate a wide array of partners.
- *The lack of public transportation in Arlington has provided the impetus for a local network model for the provision of workforce development services.* Lack of public transportation continues to be a barrier for those without cars who need to access workforce development services. In light of this, emphasis has been placed on establishing a network of Centers, ranging from full service Career Centers such as the one in described in this profile, to smaller satellite locations offering a more limited array of services.

As a result of the interaction of multiple factors, the Arlington Career Center has developed a One-Stop Center that builds on partial, rather than full, co-location of interagency partner services. Using the existing JTPA service system as the foundation for on-site Center staff and services, the Arlington Career Center has developed a One-Stop approach that involves of a wide range of interagency partners in planning and providing universal customer services through a variety of on-site, "on-call," and closely coordinated staffing arrangements and service offerings.

## **ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE LOCAL ONE-STOP**

## **INITIATIVE**

Beginning in the summer of 1994, a 22-member Job Training Interim Committee, representing a broad range of workforce development and social service agencies, began meeting on a regular basis. The purpose of these meetings was to explore options for facilitating co-location among partner agencies, sharing key information about agency programs and plans, and developing integrated services. Supported by key staff from the Arlington Human Service Planner's office, the local JTPA administrative entity, and the local Texas Employment Commission office, the planning process culminated in the establishment of the Arlington Job Training Center at its present location in November 1994.

After the Arlington Job Training Center was established as a One-Stop Career Center, governance functions were assumed by a "Site-Based Management Committee," which is currently chaired by the Arlington Center site manager. This committee, comprised of 24 committee members and fifteen ex-officio members, includes broad representation from on-site service providers, and other agencies participating in local One-Stop planning and policy development. It includes a number of individuals who were involved in the initial development of the local One-Stop career center concept.

Simultaneously with the planning and initiation of the Arlington Career Center as a One-Stop center, the county has been preparing for a county-wide transformation of the administration and oversight of workforce development services. Key changes include the consolidation of two Private Industry Councils (one for Fort Worth and one for the Balance of Tarrant County) into a single Workforce Development Board (WDB), which was to have responsibility for county-wide planning, monitoring, and evaluation of workforce development services, including ES, JTPA, school-to-work, welfare-to-work, and adult basic education programs. Each of the old Private Industry Councils held what were expected to be their final meetings in July 1996. All of the members of the WDB have been appointed and "transition" meetings have been held in anticipation of state certification of the new WDB, which was expected to occur by mid-August 1996.

The relationships between the county Workforce Development Board and local career centers had not yet been fully developed at the time of the site visit. However, the broad outlines of their future relationships are clear. State legislation establishing WDBs call for a separation of planning, evaluation, grants administration, and

oversight functions from the delivery of services. Over time, the agencies operating local One-Stop centers will be selected and funded by and receive their policy guidance and oversight from the county WDB.

The key agency partners involved in the Arlington Career Center are described below, with a brief description of the services each provider at the Center:

- *Tarrant County Employment Network (TCEN)*. Prior to the organizational changes associated with initiation of the One-Stop system in Tarrant County, TCEN was the JTPA administrative entity for the Balance of Tarrant County (excluding Fort Worth and three small adjacent cities). TCEN is viewed as the “lead operating agency” for the Arlington Career Center and is also responsible for operating another Tarrant County Career Center. TCEN was also the One-Stop Implementation Grant recipient for Tarrant County during the first and second grant years. The Program Manager for the Arlington Career Center is a TCEN employee. She also currently serves as the chair of the interagency Site-Based Management Committee that oversees Center operations. This position is expected to rotate among partners.
- *Texas Employment Commission/Texas Workforce Commission (TEC/TWC)*.<sup>1</sup> An active partner in the current Center operations, TWC staff participate in the provision of Center services, including employment services, individualized job referrals, veterans assistance, Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) information, unemployment insurance applications, and labor market information. As of May 1, 1996, a full-time JOBS counselor had been stationed at the Center to assist in the transition from welfare to employment. In addition to TWC staff stationed at the Center, additional TWC staff are “on-call” from their office located a block from the Center, are routinely contacted by Center staff, and will walk to the Center to meet customers.
- *Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC)*. TRC is co-located in the One-Stop Center, and their offices occupy about one-third of Center space. TRC provides employment and training services for persons with

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<sup>1</sup> Texas House Bill 1863, which became effective on September 1, 1995, mandated the integration of over twenty workforce development programs from a variety of agencies into a newly created Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). With the exception of the Texas Employment Commission (TEC) which was fully subsumed under the TWC, all of the other agencies continue to exist, losing only authority over the various workforce related programs merged into TWC. By March, 1996, JTPA and the Texas Department of Commerce’s workforce division had completed the merger under TWC, and the Department of Human Service’s JOBS programs and Food Stamp Employment and Training will have moved by June 1, 1996. Former TEC offices are referred to throughout this profile as TWC offices.

disabilities, including assessment, case management, job training, and placement services.

- *Tarrant County Junior College (TCJC)*. TCJC offers adult basic education classes at the Center, and also contributes to the operation of an on-site “Learning Center.” TCJC also maintains an on-site presence for a satellite of their *Small Business Development Center*, which provides information to persons seeking to start or expand business.
- *Goodwill Industries*. Goodwill is another key partner in One-Stop planning. Although the Goodwill Rehabilitation Program staff are not currently co-located at the Center, the organization has entered into serious discussions about jointly purchasing a future site with other current partners. Goodwill currently offers on-site computer and clerical training at the Center.
- *Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD)*. FWISD is a member of the Site-Based Management Committee and offers on-site evening classes in three levels of English as a Second Language (ESL).
- *Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)*. The local operator of this program is a member of the Site-Based Management Committee. Agency staff are stationed at the Center twice a week for the provision of its Older Worker Program and other services for older individuals.
- *Tarrant County Human Services (TCHS)* sends a representative to the Center on a visiting basis (generally once a week) to provide emergency grants and administer General Assistance (GA) programs.

Other agencies and individuals participate on the Site-Based Management Committee, but do not provide on-site services. A partial list includes:

- *Arlington Independent School District (AISD)*. AISD currently manages a JTPA contract with *Venture Alternative Senior High* which tries to get out-of-school youth back into the school system, and together with groups such as *Arlington Youth Services*, and the *Boys and Girls Club of Arlington* is active in school-to-work programs.
- *Arlington Human Service Planners (AHSP)*. AHSP is the joint social service planning arm of United Way and the city of Arlington.
- *University of Texas Arlington’s Division of Continuing Education*.
- *Private sector representation*. Several private sector representatives provide strategic planning input to the Site-Based Management Committee.



## **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

Several formal mechanisms for communication are in place to facilitate communication between and among local One-Stop partners. Some of these are specifically focused on the Arlington Career Center, while others are broader in scope and encompass county-wide efforts in social services and workforce development. Center based communication and coordination mechanisms are described below.

- *The development of a wide-area network with the capacity to support electronic communication* (e.g., e-mail) within the Arlington Center and between Center staff and partner agencies and other network sites, is a high priority and is being addressed as part of the development of the technology infrastructure for local One-Stop operations.
- *The Arlington Site-Based Management Committee* meets on a regular basis to coordinate Center activities, share information on service provision, and establish long-range planning goals for the Center. In addition to full committee meetings, there are also two active sub-committees on *employer services* and *customer satisfaction*.
- *Center-Based Work Groups*, which are teams of front-line staff, meet regularly to discuss current service practices across partner agencies and opportunities for improved coordination or integration of services. These include groups on *customer service, assessment, information services, and employer services*. Two other groups, *scholarship management* and *academic services*, provide information on educational opportunities related to career development. Work groups provide regular updates on their activities at staff meetings.

In addition, several of the One-Stop partner agencies participate in other forums that deal with issues related to broader social service objectives. These include:

- *The Arlington Human Service Planners*, the planning group for social service provision, which seeks to coordinate city services and non-governmental community based organizations.
- *Social Services Providers Network*, a network of managers and front line staff in government and community-based social service agencies.
- *Emergency Assistance of Tarrant County*, an inter-agency forum for providers of emergency assistance.

Active participation by a wide range of agencies is viewed as one of the strengths of the Arlington Center. However, as might be expected in a situation with many active partner agencies, communication and coordination was described as sometimes “unwieldy.” Challenges include the fact that some individuals or agencies “drop in and out” of active participation because of the large time commitment involved in

participation in multiple partnership initiatives. In spite of the challenges involved in coordinating meetings among the diverse membership of the Committee, most of the regular participants saw these scheduled meetings as extremely valuable. Members commented that the Committee provided an important opportunity for service providers to “network” and share information about the array of workforce development programs available at the Center and other sites throughout the county. Respondents said the Committee also allowed members to plan their activities with a view toward the total needs of the community and to reduce interagency duplication of effort.

Communication between local One-Stop actors and the members of the state’s One-Stop Implementation Team was described as taking place on an “as-needed” basis when questions arose. The state’s approach to communication was viewed as emphasizing “top-down” communication, from state staff to *top management staff* from the Center and other participating agencies. Although several key respondents indicated that they would appreciate more regular communication with the state, it was understood that the state One-Stop Team was busy with the transitions mandated by TWC and with preparation for a major conference scheduled for the end of May 1996. The conference was intended to publicize the new Texas Workforce Commission and promote the One-Stop concept through an exhibition of a functioning “model One-Stop Center.”

### **FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS, BUDGETING AND FISCAL ISSUES**

First year Implementation Grant funding for One-Stop implementation throughout the Tarrant County system funding totaled \$307,000, and second year funding is expected to be \$150,000. During the transition to a local Workforce Development Board, The Tarrant County Employment Network (TCEN) was designated as the fiscal agent to receive Implementation Grant funds. These funds have been used for several purposes, including:

- The staffing of interim positions to develop integrated One-Stop processes and procedures, and to modify MIS systems for the county-wide network.
- The purchase of equipment and materials, such as software and videos, that would be used by a universal customer base and the various partners at One-Stop Career Centers.

Individuals hired for the countywide staff positions funded with the implementation grant have been instrumental in developing management information

system linkages between TCEN and other partner agencies and collaborating organizations. Activities carried out by these staff have included configuring computers and networks and installing networking equipment and lines throughout the county Career Center system. These activities will help support the management functions of the newly formed county Workforce Development Board by making it possible to provide access to common client databases, share information across partner agencies, and make the network vision a reality.

In terms of overall Center operations, the integration of multiple funding streams for the provision of universal and integrated services was described as an “operational and conceptual challenge.” At the time of the site visit, there were no formal cost-sharing agreements among Center partners. Even the arrangements for sharing of the physical space at the Arlington Career Center are informal. With the exception of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, which occupies nearly one-third of the Center facility and houses its entire staff at the Center, none of the partner agencies pays TCEN (the primary lease holder) for space occupied at the Center.

Partners at the Arlington Career Center currently operate shared functions by sharing resources mainly through in-kind contributions of staff and equipment. The Texas Workforce Commission and the Tarrant County Employment Network, for example, have a formal contractual arrangements to maintain staff at the other’s service sites. Tarrant County Junior College has donated furniture and software used in the study room, classroom, conference room, and reception and office areas of the Arlington Career Center’s Learning Center. Goodwill Industries provides instructors for its “quick computer classes” provided at the Center. Four to five slots are reserved in these classes for JTPA participants at no charge (the classes are available to the general public for on a fee-for-service basis) in exchange for space at the Center. Several other partners, including the Senior Community Services Employment Program have contributed publications and other reference materials to the Center’s library.

Despite the fact that these arrangements have worked fairly well to date, TCEN’s fiscal manager indicated the desire to develop formalized cost-sharing agreements, as well as more detailed agreements specifying other non-financial responsibilities and expected benefits among partners at the Center. Center staff are also actively researching possibilities of charging fees for some services both to businesses and individuals, and are in the process of taking stock of both available resources and

Center capabilities. In the opinion of several respondents, local One-Stop centers have the potential to generate their own funds through fee-for-service arrangements, since they are regarded as offering high quality workshops and training. This would enable the Center to expand its business service offerings and make some individual services available to individuals who are not eligible under existing categorical programs.

## **DESIGN OF THE LOCAL ONE-STOP INITIATIVE**

### **Evolution and General Description of Local Design**

The Arlington Career Center came about as the result of a broad based interagency initiative with strong local support and funding. The Arlington Center traces its history to a 1992 study conducted by United Way which identified unemployment, underemployment, and skills deficits among Arlington adults. In response to this study, local officials and community leaders formed a multi-agency team in the summer of 1993, with the goal of developing plans for a locally-based integrated workforce development system. Events moved quickly. By the spring of 1994, Arlington had separated from the Fort Worth SDA, joined the Balance of Tarrant County SDA, and secured PIC approval for plans to develop a career center for the delivery of JTPA services in the city of Arlington. The city government earmarked a \$200,000 community development block grant (CDBG) for the creation of a Job Training Center in Arlington.

The One-Stop concept has continued to receive strong local political support from the office of the mayor and from the county judge, both key positions. In the spring of 1995, the city set aside an additional sum of over \$1 million in CDBG funds for the purchase and/or renovation of a career center facility. When, in November 1995, the Tarrant County Employment Network chose a building that had been vacant for a decade and had been only recently renovated as the site for the new Arlington Career Center, it was hoped that several additional workforce development partners involved in career center planning would be able to locate their own offices in the same complex. However, several of the non-profit organizations which had originally hoped to locate in the same building with the Center were not able to afford rents in the building. Efforts to purchase the building on behalf of several partners were not successful.

Because the physical facility selected for the Arlington Career Center did not lead to full co-location of multiple agency partners, the One-Stop model that has evolved draws on the combined features of “co-location” and “no-wrong-door” approaches.

The service approach emphasizes sharing staff across multiple agencies and local service sites, including part-time and full-time out-stationing of staff from a variety of partner agencies at the Arlington Career Center. Although many agency partners are represented at the Center, the Center has not had to deal with the “culture clash” that is likely to arise from full co-location of large programs with different histories, as has occurred in other One Stop Centers throughout the country that have brought full ES/UI and JTPA operations together at one site.

### **Relevance of the Local Design to the Four Federal Themes**

#### **Universal Access**

Although the Arlington Career Center has grown out of a JTPA-funded service delivery system, the partners at the Arlington Center have developed a service delivery strategy to reach a universal population. Through the implementation of the concept of different tiers of service (e.g., self-service; group services, such as workshops; and intensive individual services) self-service options are used to accommodate an increased volume of individual customers, including individuals from the general public not eligible for specific categorical programs. To enhance the Center’s visibility to a broad customer base, partners in the Center use regular meetings and forums involving Center partners and other agencies, as well as the preparation and distribution of flyers and information packets on Center workshops and services.

The Center also provides extended hours of service three evenings a week, in order to reach working and under-employed persons looking for opportunities to upgrade skills or change careers, as well as to offer increased customer access to Center-based classes in ESL and computer instruction. As described in a later section under core services, most universal services at the Center are accessed through a “Resource Room” and a “Career Library.” The Resource Room, which offers access to the Job Bank, computers, a phone bank, and fax machines, is one of the most popular services offered at the center.

#### **Customer Choice**

The Tarrant County network of full-service and satellite career centers is designed to offer county residents a choice of where to access workforce development services. Within the Arlington Career Center, customers are able to access to a wide variety of services.

Currently, the Resource Room and Career Library offer the services available to the general public. Using these self-service options, for example, individuals can research on-line job listings, call job-line numbers, and access labor market information. They can also practice interviewing skills using interactive computer software, use typing and other office software tutorials, locate information on other community resources, and obtain information about scholarships and career training.

Orientation and information sessions let customers know what other services are available. All customers may register for job search assistance and information about UI benefits, or attend a Job Forum, a weekly networking and support group, to which guest speakers, including area employers, are invited to speak.

Individuals eligible for categorical programs such as JTPA, JOBS, TAA, or other services targeted to youth, veterans, older workers, or other target groups are informed about their service options.

### **Integrated Services**

The partners in the Tarrant County Career Center network have adopted a flexible network approach to the provision of One-Stop services, with each of the seven full-service Career Centers in the County offering a different configuration of co-located and “no wrong door” linkages to comprehensive services for Center customers.

Because the facility selected for the Arlington Career Center did not lead to the degree of co-location originally envisioned, service integration among Center partners who are not co-located is expressed through close coordination of activities among partners, resulting in personalized services to Center customers. For example, if an individual Center customer who is a veteran indicates an interest in career or placement counseling, a Veterans’ Services representative from the nearby TWC office is “on call” and will come to the Center to meet with the individual. In general, physical proximity allows for frequent face-to-face and telephone contact between staff of the Arlington Center and nearby TWC staff, and for coordination of services on behalf of individual customers. Although some respondents indicated that there would have been advantages to a greater degree of co-location, others felt that a smaller Center with fewer on-site staff has made it easier to create a “customer-friendly” office, in contrast to a larger-scale facility, which might have had a more bureaucratic atmosphere.

Among staff co-housed at the Arlington Center, while cross-training among staff from different agencies is still in an early stage, there are plans to cross-train staff to

facilitate integration of core services and case management functions. As the lead agency operating the Arlington Career Center, TCEN is committed to providing “seamless services” to customers by promoting coordination among on-site service providers. All staff at the Arlington Center, no matter what agency they work for, are identified by their name badges as “Arlington Career Center” staff. Many of the common functions within the Center, including customer reception, orientation, and intake have been integrated across all in-house staff. The Center appears to have achieved the goal of “seamless” services from the customer perspective, as indicated by the fact that Center customers who participated in focus groups during the site visit were unaware that Center staff were employees of a number of different agencies.

While the Center is faced with many internal management challenges around issues of cost-sharing, cost-accounting, and assigning credit for customer outcomes, there is a clear commitment to ensure that these questions do not become their customers’ problems.

### **Performance-Driven/Outcome-Based Measures**

Respondents expressed an interest in measuring both the short- and long-term impacts of the One-Stop system. They also felt that accountability issues are changing as part of the transition from an employment and training system that provides personal assistance to individuals and is held accountable for individual placement outcomes, to a system in which many customers may find their own jobs through access to unsuppressed job listings available through electronic bulletin boards accessed at a distance.

Under such conditions, measurement of consumer satisfaction is increasing in importance. A local customer satisfaction team was established to assess individual and employer customer feedback. The team draws on assessment techniques recommended by sources such as the technical assistance guides prepared as part of the ES “Simply Better” initiative. As a result of team efforts, customers using the Center are currently asked to complete a form with suggestions, comments, or complaints. Completed forms are posted in the Resource Room and customer feedback is regularly reported to staff.

Respondents indicated that it is difficult, under the rapidly changing environment prompted by One-Stop, to assign “credit” to any agency for outcomes, as is currently required by a variety of program-specific performance and accountability measures,

particularly since several partner agencies often work with the same customer. Respondent stated that within a One-Stop environment, performance measurements should capture system-wide benefits. Center staff expressed frustration that program-specific performance measures have not kept pace with the rapid changes brought about by the initiation of One-Stop centers.

### **Physical Facilities**

The design of a One-Stop facility has been a major issue for the Arlington Career Center. It was originally envisioned that a common facility would be found to accommodate all of the original partners involved in the design of the Center. In November 1994, TCEN moved into the current Center location. The facility is two blocks from an office of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), and a half-mile from the Arlington Human Services Complex. For a variety of reasons, other partners were not able to locate in the same complex. Although the Center has adapted to the lack of full co-location at the current facility, the search continues for another location that would permit additional partners to locate with TCEN in a shared “workforce development campus.”

At the present Center location, the main customer entrance leads into an attractive atrium area of the two-story brick office building. A stairway leading to the second floor divides the ground floor into two halves. Turning right from the atrium area, customers enter a small welcome area, where they are greeted by a receptionist. Staff at the Center indicated that having a reception area was a small thing with a big impact, and was influenced by the desire to achieve a “private sector” image. According to one respondent, “[because we have a reception area] there is no bullpen approach—keeping people penned up while waiting for us to call them. Having this space, the receptionist is free to interact with clients.”

Immediately behind the reception area is a Career Library, which has an information desk staffed by a full-time Center employee. Customers can reach the Resource Room either through the Career Library, or by walking down the main corridor. (Services available in the Resource Room and Career Library are described under core services, below.) The remaining portion of the ground floor is occupied by a Learning Center which is used for adult basic education classes and computer courses and by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission. Second floor office space has been leased to private businesses. The exterior of the building is well maintained; there are



landscaped areas with recently planted bushes, and there is adequate customer and staff parking on the side and to the rear of the building.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS**

### **Staffing Arrangements**

Although the local Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC) office is the only other agency that is fully co-located with TCEN at the Arlington Career Center, a number of other agencies house some staff on a full-time or part-time basis at the Center. In a parallel fashion, some TCEN staff are outstationed at the TWC offices in Arlington and at Bedford (about fifteen miles from Arlington) to support the One-Stop delivery of JTPA-funded services at these career centers.

TWC locates some of its full time staff at the Center, so that customers can apply for unemployment benefits and, since May 1996, Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) Assistance, without leaving the Center. Also as of May 1996, a full-time JOBS counselor at the Center to assist Center customers who are eligible for, or currently participating in both JOBS and JTPA services.

Other examples of on-site Center staffing arrangements involve Goodwill Industries and Tarrant County Junior College. TCJC's community service arm reaches hard-to-serve populations through its on-site adult basic education and GED preparation classes. TCJC maintains a teacher's aide at the Career Center's Learning Center. ABE/GED classes offered at the Center are open to the general public. In exchange for classroom space at the Center, TCJC reserves a certain number of slots in each class for JTPA customers. Goodwill's Rehabilitation Program currently provides instructors for on-site computer and clerical training programs. These classes are available to the general public on a fee-for-service basis. In exchange for access to classroom space at the Learning Center, Goodwill allocates an average of four of ten slots in each course free of charge to JTPA customers.

### **Capacity Building**

Capacity building efforts for Center staff include both state-directed and locally-initiated efforts. Because of the large geographical size of the state and limitations on travel budgets, only management staff from the Center and its partner agencies have been able to attend state-initiated staff training offered in other locations. In a few cases, often in tandem with bi-annual "benchmarking" visits, state One-Stop teams and

SOICC representatives have traveled to Arlington to provide technical assistance and training.

Despite the relative lack of state-initiated training, capacity building efforts within the Center do not appear to have suffered. Locally-initiated training sessions have been provided to Center staff and there are plans to hire outside consultants to conduct additional staff training workshops. Limited cross-training has been provided to Center staff on the specific content of employer services, unemployment insurance benefits, and JTPA programs, and on other partner agency programs. In addition, site-based work groups, discussed earlier, have also been a source of capacity building at the Center. Each of these groups is charged with preparing updates on their work on specific topics (assessment, customer service, information services, employer services, academic services, and scholarship management) for presentation to Center staff. Through these activities, front-line staff have pooled their knowledge and expertise in specific areas.

Capacity building efforts at the Center have not had to respond to organizational conflict or staff trauma as a result of merging the staff from multiple agency cultures. Although many partners are represented at the Center, the Center does not house the full staffs of several major programs (e.g. ES/UI and JTPA) in one location. Perhaps as a result, the Center has not had to adjust to organizational change as at some One-Stop centers nationwide. Rather, the staff at the Arlington Career Center have the luxury of being able to absorb a relatively small number of representatives from many partner agencies into a predominantly JTPA-driven organizational culture.

### **Management Information Systems (MIS)**

The state of Texas, through TWC, has been instrumental in the design of One-Stop management information systems. They have assisted local sites, including the Arlington Center, to establish computer protocols for accessing a variety of state databases. However, the development of integrated intake, assessment, and case management tools for use at the local level has been delayed as a result of competition among the partner state agencies and their respective private sector partners for contracts to develop a statewide MIS. Legal issues about confidentiality have also been a source of disagreement among state agency partners. Because of these difficulties at the state level, TCEN's MIS staff have been given the "green light" to move ahead with their own local integrated systems. Locally initiated efforts have progressed

rapidly, and in some areas, such as integrated intake, have outpaced state MIS development efforts.

The objectives for the management of information systems at the Arlington Center are to design and implement an open computer system conforming to industry standards that connects to the MIS systems of all agencies that want to be partners in the One-Stop system. In mid-1995, partner agencies formed an information technology group at the Resource Connection, a second One-Stop site in Fort Worth. This group later began the joint development of an integrated MIS system at the Resource Connection which has become the networking hub of a county-wide automated intake and case management system.

During the site visit, respondents described a high level of cooperation, particularly among the 'big players," JTPA and TWC, in working toward such a system. Although not all elements of such a system are currently in place, rapid progress is being made to reach this goal. As of June 1996, the *information technology* work group was holding weekly meetings with the technical and operations staff of One-Stop partner agencies and other local agencies participating in the development of a shared integrated management information system. During a recent meeting, each agency presented its most recent information requirements for intake and case management, and a preliminary decision was made to purchase "off the shelf" intake and "pre-assessment" modules developed by DSI, a private software vendor. This is seen as an interim solution to implementing integrated intake and assessment, pending development of an integrated system at the state level.

The Center has already developed and implemented an automated system to track customer use of the Center and its services. In terms of the ability to share client-level information among partner agencies, rapid progress is also being made. During the evaluation site visit in May 1996, TWC staff were still obliged to telephone the Center for information about JTPA clients. Since that time, more TWC offices have become networked, and now have the capability to access shared databases. It is anticipated that most of the agencies involved in the information technology committee will soon be linked through a wide area network (WAN).

### **Labor Market Information and Related Information Technology Improvements**

The state of Texas has also been instrumental in developing enhanced labor market information for improved technology-based products for One-Stop customers.

The Arlington Center has access to the full array of labor market information and related information technology from the Texas State Occupational Information & Coordinating Committee (SOICC).<sup>2</sup> These include two statewide LMI systems, Texas “Rescue”—a case management tool originally intended for dislocated workers and to emphasize skills transfer—and Texas CARES (the Career Alternatives Resource Evaluation System)—a user-friendly comprehensive career information delivery system oriented to career exploration for people with little work experience.

These LMI products as well as Job Express, TWC’s job listing service, are available to Center customers at 12 computer terminals located in the Center’s Resource Room. Job listings can also be accessed from remote home or business locations using a PC with a modem by connecting to a bulletin board service (BBS). As a result of remote dial-in access to TWC’s automated job listings, there has been a rapid expansion in the number of customers using this service. Job Express *kiosks* are also located in several locations throughout Arlington in areas with high pedestrian traffic such as malls and discount stores.

At the time of the evaluation site visit, Internet access via the computers at the Center was a priority project, and has since been completed. As a result, the Center has experienced a rapidly increasing demand for access to computers and plans to expand the number of computer terminals available at the Center.

### **Marketing**

Marketing One-Stop career centers is viewed as the responsibility of the workforce development *system*, including the county network and the state, rather than of individual career centers. However, TCEN has invested in its own marketing efforts in the area of business services, and has prepared and distributed a professionally-designed color brochure describing its services to businesses. In addition, to fulfill its local outreach and marketing needs, local partners have prepared an orientation packet that describes individual, group, and self-services offered at Career Centers. Individual flyers from the orientation packet are also distributed to partner agencies.

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<sup>2</sup> SOICC has responsibility for technology and information related to occupational information for five state-mandated partners including Texas Education Agency (TEA), JTPA, the Department of Economic Development, Department of Rehabilitation, and TEC.

Although the Center has not paid for general advertising, the programs offered at the Center have received press coverage in local papers, and specific events sponsored by Center partners, such as quarterly job fairs, are well publicized. Open houses, which Center staff have also found to be effective in publicizing Center activities, are held periodically. For example, Center staff were planning with the local Chamber of Commerce for a Chamber-sponsored open house at the Center late summer 1996.

The Center also relies heavily on linkages with other agencies to publicize its services, and respondents indicated that marketing efforts have increased since the implementation of the One-Stop concept.

## **DELIVERY OF ONE-STOP SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS**

### **Services for Individual Customers**

The Center has drawn on the concept of an *inverted pyramid* of service delivery. Because of continuing reductions in funds for social and career development services, some respondents used the metaphor of medical triage, or "treating the severely wounded first," as central to the implementation of multiple tiers of service. In their view, One-Stop is much more than a *technological* revolution, but it was becoming clearer that because of diminishing resources, people have to do more for themselves. Respondents indicated that an important function of staff at One-Stop centers is increasingly teaching people how to use available resources. At the same time, there is an appreciation among Center staff that customers are in different positions on a learning curve. The challenge of designing and implementing services in a One-Stop setting is to offer universal services while continuing to meet the needs of those requiring more individualized services, through a thoughtful tailoring of the mix of services to meet the needs of their customer base.

In the hierarchy of services provided by a variety of programs and agencies, the first tier of "core services" include those available to the general public at no cost. The Resource Room and Career Library are the location of most core services within the Arlington Career Center. Core services appear to be highly valued by Center customers. For example, a large majority of customers surveyed during the first quarter of 1996 indicated that they had come that day to use the Resource Room and Career Library. Services available through the Resource Room/Career Library include:

- Assistance with learning to use résumé writing software

- Access to free fax and telephones for contacting employers
- On-line job listings through the state's Job Express and America's Job Bank
- On-line labor market information
- Interactive computer programs for enhancing interviewing skills
- Information on other community resources
- Information on scholarships and career training
- A variety of computer tutorials for typing and using software

The Career Library also contains written reference materials on companies, resume writing and job search strategies, as well as newspapers and periodicals containing job listings. The Career Library has a staffed information desk. During a focus group conducted as part of the evaluation visit, several customers commended the individual staffing the information desk for her knowledge about the materials in the room and the quality of professional assistance provided.

The Center also offers all customers information about the range of programs and services offered by Center partners and a preliminary or final determination of eligibility for these programs. Center staff (either TCEN staff or outstationed staff from other agencies) can register customers with TWC for employment services, take UI applications, and offer customers access to programs and services available from JTPA, JOBS services for AFDC recipients, Food Stamp Employment and Training Services, Veterans' Employment and Training Services, Trade Adjustment Assistance benefits, and Older Worker Programs. Because the Texas Rehabilitation Commission has its offices in the same facility, customers with disabilities can be easily referred there for services.

Additional services housed at the Center, some of which are available to the general public at no cost, include ABE, GED, and ESL classes offered through the on-site Learning Center by staff from the Tarrant County Junior College and the Fort Worth Independent School District. Computer training classes offered by Goodwill at the Center are available to the general public on a fee basis.

The second and third tiers of service available through the Center include group workshops and the provision of individualized assessment, career counseling, and training supports. Because the Arlington Career Center originated as a JTPA-funded facility and JTPA still pays for the majority of staff stationed at the Center, eligibility

for JTPA is still currently a requirement for access to many of the second and third tier Center services provided at the Center.

“Second-tier” services consist of group workshops. The Center offers a series of highly-regarded subject-specific modular workshops of about two hours duration on such subjects as job hunting techniques, effective telephone contact, applications, resumes, interviewing skills and practice interviews. These workshops were originally designed to be part of a comprehensive menu of services available to JTPA participants as part of an individual education, training, or reemployment plan. JTPA-eligible individuals who are participating the services provided by another agency (e.g., JOBS or FSE&T) may also sign up to attend workshops at the Center. At the present time, some non-JTPA eligible customers are offered access to these workshops on a space available basis. Center staff are considering how to develop other funding streams, including the possibility of fee-for-service arrangements, to make group workshops available to the general public.

Third-tier services available to Center customers include the specialized services funded under specific categorical programs. For customers qualifying for these programs, services include individual assessment of basic skills, interests, and aptitudes and development of a job search or training plan. Other services provided to Center customers include tuition assistance in approved training, career interest matching, financial aid counseling, continuing individualized job search assistance, customized resume development, and a variety of support services including transportation assistance.

### **Services for Employer Customers**

Although services for employers are not yet as well-developed as those for individuals, the Arlington Center has the potential to develop strong employer services using the same broad-based interagency collaboration, networking, and partnerships it has exhibited in the development of services for individual job seekers. An interagency Employer Services Unit within the Center has initiated contacts with small and medium-sized businesses in Arlington, using the business-oriented marketing brochure discussed above.

Core services offered to employer customers at no charge include job listings, managed by TWC staff, and access to individualized referrals from Center job developers and job brokers. Among the expanded services offered to employers in the

past is customized job training. TCEN has a track record of providing customized training for large local employers. TWC and TCEN have also conducted large scale recruitment efforts for large local employers involving assessment, screening, and placement. As a result of its past successes in providing firms assistance in meeting their recruitment and customized training needs, an active center-based work group is considering how to develop fee-based specialized business services.

Related to the work of the Employer Services Unit are several entrepreneurial training programs offered on-site by Center partners. These include the *Small Business Development Center* (SBDC) and the *Electronic Commerce Resource Center* (ECRC). SBDC is a professional management counseling service operated by TCJC using funds from the Small Business Administration and the U.S. Department of Commerce. SBDC programs include one-on-one counseling to new entrepreneurs and to established businesses, and classes on subjects related to the start-up of new businesses. Links with other business related services through the SBDC include the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center and Internal Revenue Service seminars. ECRC plans to begin a thirty hour course at the Center for small business customers. This course will focus on teaching business-related computer skills and Internet use.

## **CUSTOMER RESPONSE**

### **Individuals**

As part of the evaluation site visit, a focus group was arranged with individual customers receiving a broad range of Center services, ranging from self services to intensive services. Individual respondents were uniformly enthusiastic about the services they had received at the Center. Several respondents indicated that the loss of employment had been a traumatic experience, describing their initial reaction to the experience using terms such as “humiliated” and “stunned.” Respondents indicated that they viewed the Center as a place to get their lives back together, to meet and share information about job leads with other people that were looking for work, and as a place that boosted their morale. “The whole idea of the place is to get people back to work,” said one respondent. “This is the best place for someone who wants to improve their life.” In general, customers believed the Center offered a significant departure from “traditional” workforce development services in terms of the level of staff support, the professional environment, and the range of available services and customer choice.



Several pointed to résumé writing, salary negotiation, and other workshops held at the Center as very informative and helpful, and crucial to their job search. Others pointed to the willingness of Center staff to assist them in using technology to do searches through job banks or to research companies on-line. One customer praised the “patient and professional attitude” of the Career Library and Resource Room staff. Another found that the Center offered him a menu of choices and opportunities: “I would go to as many workshops as I could,” said one customer, “and if there were none on that day, I would still come in to use the computers and check job listings in the Resource Room.”

While many of the respondents made use of self-service and group service offerings, others required more individualized attention. One of the respondents had been unemployed for one and half years during which his family lost all of their possessions except for one bed. “In the process of packing,” he said, “I had to leave behind an \$800 sofa that no one would buy. We had to leave behind the dishes we got on our wedding day. I hope my wife and children never have to go through that again, experience that level of poverty.” After filing for bankruptcy, he enrolled in a JTPA-funded technical training program through the Center, and was able to find work as a mechanic.

To summarize, individual customers were very complimentary in their assessment of staff and programs offered at the Center. They commented on the broad mix of services available, included well-developed self-service options and group workshops related to job search and employment skills preparation. Customers that had participated in staffed services such as workshops and individualized training programs found the services valuable in increasing their morale and preparedness for the transition back to employment.

### **Employers**

Site visitors met with a business representative who sat on both of the existing Tarrant County Private Industry Councils as well as an individual who had co-chaired the Arlington Interim Job Training Committee. Both respondents had been involved in planning for the transformation to a One-Stop center and spoke from this perspective, rather than offering a purely “employer perspective.” These respondents felt that many of the area’s large employers were aware of, and had used the services available from Center partners. Interviewees agreed that it would be important to involve more

small employers in the activities of the Center and to publicize the kinds of employer services offered.

Some of the programs recently introduced at the Center, such as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) were too new, according to respondents, to have produced tangible results. Respondents agreed that the mechanisms used to make services more attractive to employers, such as job brokering and customer account representatives, were now well established, and that further development of business services was only a matter of time and effort.

### **INFLUENCES ON LOCAL DESIGN**

The federal One-Stop Implementation Grant was an important catalyst in speeding up the process of coordinating workforce development services in Arlington. The grant made possible: 1) a strengthening of the coordination and communication among the many One-Stop partners both at the Center and throughout the Tarrant County system, and 2) rapid progress in linking the various information technology systems of TCEN, TWC, TDHS and other agency partners.

State-mandated integration of a myriad of workforce development programs under one administrative roof, was also clearly an important impetus for the rapid and broad-ranging changes that have come about in Tarrant County as part of the One-Stop planning and implementation process. The state has been highly influential in its clear policy support for the development of integrated local One-Stop centers, while at the same time, through the creation of local Workforce Development Boards, has encouraged a great degree of local control over local workforce development planning and resource allocation. The state has also made a large investment in information technologies, from which the Arlington Center and the broader Tarrant County network of One-Stop career centers have benefited.

Because the new WDB had not yet been certified, it was still unclear what types of changes will be implemented at the local level as the new system for local governance is established, and what impact this will have on service providers and the range of customers served at One-Stop Centers. Respondents at the Arlington Center are, however, confident in the belief that they will be able to offer a broad range of workforce related services to a diverse customer base. Because Tarrant County One-Stop planners have been proactive in establishing a broad-based collaborative effort throughout the county, and because there is continuing strong political support for

workforce development efforts among local and county officials, Center staff feel that they have established a strong foundation for continued evolution of the One-Stop approach in Tarrant County.

### **ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED**

The national One-Stop initiative has had a strong impact on the formulation of clear policy objectives and effective implementation of many of the One-Stop goals in Arlington, Texas. Key One-Stop players there consistently stress the importance of working together in broad coalitions, and view the One-Stop philosophy as a radical departure from previous ways of doing business. They counsel new One-Stop practitioners about the importance of maintaining excitement about the project, while at the same time being prepared for a multitude of difficult adjustments that require “taking a deep breath and jumping in.” One-Stop offers the opportunity to work with a wide variety of people, agencies, and employers. From their perspective, participants in One-Stop initiatives must be also be willing to spend a great deal of time and effort on “internal marketing” to partners, through extensive meetings, and consensus and capacity building efforts.

Building local political and financial support for these efforts is also another important part of the equation for success. While workforce development and social service provision were not a major priority in Arlington throughout the 1980s, defense cutbacks prompted local civic leaders to reassess the need for locally-based workforce development services. As a result of the commitment of key community leaders, interagency policy forums were initiated and a consensus was established around furthering an integrated workforce development approach. Because many of these developments occurred before the One-Stop Implementation Grant was received and before the passage of state legislation mandating consolidation of workforce programs under the TWC, the local transition to One-Stop Career Centers was greatly facilitated.